PACIFIC FOREST TRUST

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

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NRDC
NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL

Conservation Community Recommendations on the Forest Carbon Plan

Goal: Achieve future forest conditions across the landscape (public and private owners, large and small) to maintain and increase net forest carbon stocks in a manner that restores more natural forest structure and fire regimes, provides high-quality, diverse habitat that is functionally connected across the landscape, and protects and restores water quality and watershed integrity in a changing climate.

Guiding Principles:

- Promote actions that provide benefits that persist over the long term.
- Recognize that restoring natural structural diversity and fire to forests (at multiple scales) is essential to promoting and achieving the goals of increased carbon stocks, enhanced habitat, and improved watershed health.
- Ensure that forest ecosystems include the full range of naturally occurring habitat types, including complex early seral and complex late seral conditions, by valuing them in the Forest Carbon Plan.
- Conserve and promote natural forest structure and function and natural diversity of structure at all scales. Both conserving the extent of forestland, as well as ensuring more natural forest management systems, are needed to achieve resilience.
- Protect and enhance native biodiversity as a core element of the FCP.
- Fully account for the net emissions that generally occur from thinning, even when deployed to reduce fire risk.
- Recognize that different areas on the landscape will have different planning and management priorities. For example, management of forests within and adjacent to communities may place a greater emphasis on actions to reduce fire intensity to increase public safety, while management of forests farther from communities should focus on protecting and improving fish and wildlife habitat, water quality and watershed integrity (diverse, natural structure in the forest, streams, riparian areas and wetlands).

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- Maintain, rebuild and protect large intact landscapes, recognizing that land-use conversion and intensive harvest practices degrade critical habitat, and impair wildlife migration and watershed integrity.
- Fully mitigate carbon lost to land use conversion, including lost future sequestration capacity.
- Develop forest carbon accounting methodologies that allow for site-specific analysis of the carbon impacts of individual projects, and analysis of policy proposals at multiple scales, including site, regional and state levels. These methods should be compatible with and include timescales relevant to both short-term and long-term climate goals.

Suggested tactics:

- Within the next two years, the state should develop spatially explicit GHG reduction goals and a monitoring and reporting system for the forest sector based on a statewide analysis of GHG emissions threats and sequestration opportunities. This analysis will allow the state to invest resources and design policies more strategically to optimize climate and multiple benefits.
- Align the outcomes desired for carbon storage, wildlife habitat, and watershed health to create an integrated climate approach.
- Use prescribed and managed fire on the landscape. Work at a watershed or regional scale to allow for fire across substantially large areas at mixed severity.
- Prioritize conservation and restoration in key watersheds to improve forest watershed integrity, with diverse, natural structure in the forest, streams, riparian areas and wetlands.
- Use easements or acquisitions to connect and expand existing public lands that serve as wildlife refugia, to facilitate adaptation.
- Protect watersheds as essential components of our state's water supply.

FCAT Actions and Investments should:

1) **Establish a carbon accounting framework for the forest sector.**
No later than July 1, 2015, the Air Resources Board, with input from the Natural Resources Agency, should convene a public proceeding to develop accounting methodologies that account for GHG emissions and reductions at multiple scales, including site, regional and statewide, and permit evaluation of the net atmospheric impacts of projects and policy proposals relative to both short-term and long-term climate goals.
2) **Be enduring**. Interventions should focus on creating benefits that are intended to be permanent, consistent with global climate goals.
3) **Establish a program to fully mitigate the carbon emissions from forest conversion.**
4) **Support & restore natural systems that are resilient under climate stresses.** Increasing forest carbon storage must be integrated with and support well-functioning natural systems. To avoid unintended consequences and foster multiple benefits, carbon sequestration goals must include criteria for evaluating associated environmental impacts and benefits, including wildlife habitat, structural diversity, and stream and watershed health.